

Reflection Easter 4 Acts 2. 42-end

Luke's second book of the New Testament, The Acts of the Apostles, is usually understood as an idealised form of history; in other words more theology than history, more what the writer might have hoped than an accurate account of events. Nevertheless this sketch of the early Church is striking – they shared all their goods in common, and sold possessions to meet the needs of others. We do not know how widely the 'others' extended – just those within the group of worshippers, other similar groups, or the wider Jewish or Gentile communities?

We might argue, that was right then in those early days, we're in a totally different situation now, but the contrast between how we live as followers of Jesus now and how they did then is sharp. Perhaps the rot set in very early – the Roman Emperor Constantine lifted the prohibitions against Christianity, and converted in 337 on his death-bed. Leonardo Boff in *Church, Charism and Power* (1985) certainly dated the Church's difficulties with power from these events. His views were not popular in the Vatican and he was suspended from his teaching role.

Similarly, there seems to be little appetite in the current Church of England for equal pay for all clergy, for example, including bishops and archbishops, or much effort in local congregations for a true sharing of goods in common. The tithing of our 'non-conformist' brothers and sisters might give us a model.

However, looking at how we have constructed our post-war society, especially the National Health Service, suggests that willingly at first, more reluctantly later, we have embraced some notion of sharing goods to support the most vulnerable; and this into the widest parts of our country. Current government support for businesses and self-employed people during this crisis will be paid for by all of us for years to come. Do we bemoan this, or rejoice that for a moment we are in line with our early Christian forebears?

Fr David

As with the last few Sundays, it would be good if we try to say our prayers in some form **together at 10.30** on Sunday mornings, and to be intentionally holding each other up to God, and praying for the wider community of St Thomas.

NEXT SUNDAY 10th May 2020

SERVICES Public worship suspended



READINGS

(NT): Acts 7. 55-end
NT: 1 Peter 2. 2-10
GOSPEL: John 14. 1-14

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St Thomas, Exeter

Sunday 3rd May 2020

Easter 4

Many thanks to all who have kept up their parish giving by standing order or the national Parish Giving Scheme, despite all the stresses and strains of current circumstances. You are vital to the continuing work of St Thomas. You can now set up a new account with Parish Giving on the phone : 0333 002 1271.

The Church of England has produced a useful resource for our current circumstances 'A Simple Reflection **at home on the day of a funeral** you can't attend. This can be found by following this link

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/Funerals%20liturgy%20at%20home%20public.pdf>

If you receive this pewsheet by post, We're going to include this next week in the mailing.

Community Larder Please keep up donations for this, with a drop-off point at St Thomas on Tuesday and Thursday mornings 10-12 in the Hall. Collections are from the Methodist Church on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 10-12. *Fr David*



Collect

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life; raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Acts 2.42-end

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

1 Peter 2. 19-end

For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do what is right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his footsteps.

'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.'

When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

John 10. 1-10

'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers'. Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'



Post-Communion Prayer

Merciful Father, you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd, and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again; keep us always under his protection, and give us grace to follow in his steps; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

NOTICES

Church of England coronavirus prayers

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love our neighbour, and to care for those in need as if we were caring for you. In this time of anxiety, give us strength to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick, and to assure the isolated of our love, and your love, for your name's sake. **Amen.**

Gracious God, give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who are caring for the sick, and your wisdom to those searching for a cure. Strengthen them with your Spirit, that through their work many will be restored to health; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Thought from John White:

A Bishop was holidaying in the Highlands when he got chatting to an old countryman on a bus. The Bishop asked the man's occupation. 'I'm a shepherd', the man replied, 'with over 1000 sheep.' 'I'm a shepherd too,' said the Bishop. 'My flock is of many thousands.'

The old man shook his head in amazement, 'However do you manage in the lambing season?!'